

# Maine Congress of Lake Associations

## 12 STEPS to BUILDING YOUR LAKE ASSOCIATION

1. **Form a steering committee:** Identify several people interested in lake protection and invite them to a meeting to discuss forming a lake association.
2. **Create a Mission Statement:** Your Mission is your touchstone; all goals, objectives and activities flow from it. At your first steering committee meeting, try to define your purpose as a mission statement. *Example:* The Crystal Lake Association protects and improves the water quality of Crystal Lake through preservation, education and action.
3. **Develop a Vision and Program for your Association.** List what you'd like to accomplish in 3 to 5 years, then choose several Goals from that list. Create an Action Plan for each Goal, assigning responsibility and completion dates.
4. **Organize and Hold a Public Meeting:** Share your plans with other lake and watershed residents to enlist their support. *It is often helpful at this stage to invite a knowledgeable spokesperson to speak about lakes and lake associations.*
  - a. Objectives:
    - i. Share your goals
    - ii. Enlist support and volunteer help
  - b. Logistics:
    - i. Select a central, convenient meeting location
    - ii. Schedule the meeting at a convenient time
    - iii. Serve food!
    - iv. Inform people well in advance (30 days is good!)
5. **Write your Bylaws:** For a sample By-laws template or advice on By-laws, write Maine COLA at [info@mainecola.org](mailto:info@mainecola.org) or POB 426, Belgrade, ME 04917; or call 877-254-2511.
6. **Elect a Board:** Elect a board of directors following the procedure described in your bylaws. Many lake groups transition the Steering Group into their first board.
7. **Register as a Nonprofit Corporation with the Maine Secretary of State.** This does not make your Association a nonprofit in the eyes of the IRS, but establishes your corporate identity with the State of Maine. It is a simple procedure which can be accomplished online or by mail. It provides limited protection against liability for officers and directors of the corporation. (<http://www.state.me.us/sos/cec/corp/nonprofit.html>)
8. **Develop a database of member names and contact information:** Appoint one person to be responsible for maintaining an address list of present and potential members.
9. **Publish a Newsletter and Send out a Membership Request:** Publish a Newsletter right away, even if it's only one page. Announce the creation of the association and describe plans for the future. Include a request for residents and users to join and be sure to print a membership form readers can clip and mail back to you. A pre-printed return envelope, called a remit envelope, can also be inserted to make responding easier.
10. **Choose one Project:** Implement the action plan for one of the Goals you have chosen. The plan may be as simple as distributing educational information at a picnic, or as ambitious as conducting a watershed survey. Your key to success will be accomplishing one action that fulfills your Mission goals.
11. **Communicate!** Blow your horn! Publicize your accomplishment(s). *Nothing is more important than stewardship, but sustainability requires marketing and good communication.*
12. **Get nonprofit (501©3) status with the IRS.** 501©3 Status isn't a requirement, but it helps fundraising because donations and dues are tax deductible and this encourages donors. Most foundations require tax exempt status as a requirement for grants. You'll probably want the help of an attorney for this process.